

**U.S. Department of Education - EDCAPS
G5-Technical Review Form (New)**

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 08/17/2018 05:30 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Colorado Charter School Institute (U282T180011)

Reader #1: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Significance of the proposed project		
1. Significance	35	35
Quality of Project Design		
1. Project Design	30	27
Quality of Management Plan/adequacy of resources		
1. Management Plan/Resources	15	12
Quality of Project Personnel		
1. Project Personnel	10	8
Quality of the Project Evaluation		
1. Project Evaluation	10	10
Sub Total	100	92
Priority Questions		
Competitive Preference Priority 1		
Building Capacity in the Authorizing Process		
1. Building Capacity	5	3
Sub Total	5	3
Competitive Preference Priority 2		
Empowering Families and Individuals		
1. Families and Individuals	5	4
Sub Total	5	4
Total	110	99

Technical Review Form

Panel #1 - CSP National Dissemination - 1: 84.282T

Reader #1: *****

Applicant: Colorado Charter School Institute (U282T180011)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Significance of the proposed project

1. The Secretary considers the significance of the proposed project. In determining the significance of the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors (up to 35 points):

(1) The potential for generalizing from the findings or results of the proposed project;

(2) The extent to which the results of the proposed project are to be disseminated in ways that will enable others to use the information or strategies;

(3) The likelihood that the proposed project will result in system change or improvement; and

(4) The extent to which the proposed project is likely to build local capacity to provide, improve, or expand services that address the needs of the target population.

Strengths:

The project is seeking to improve the authorization practices of Districts so that the large number of charter schools in their portfolio will have easy access to best practice documents and easy conversations. Because 53% of charter schools nationally are authorized by districts, with 73% of the districts only authorizing 1 or 2 schools, the scope of this project has far reaching potential. (Pg. e24, e27 – e28)

Through the building of relationships between State Education Agencies (SEA) and state authorizers, the applicant will disseminate findings quickly through conversations and Professional Learning opportunities. Information will be posted on each partner's website and findings will be presented at state and national conferences. (Pg. e54 – e55)

Districts account for 90% of the total authorizers in the nation. Even though these authorizers account for only 53% of the charter schools in the nation, that percentage is increasing as more states have approved charter laws. Because of the significant presence of district authorizers, it is likely that positive results of the project will have an opportunity to produce system change. (Pg. e35 – e36)

By providing district authorizers with research and information relating to best practices for use within their charter school portfolio, disseminated in methods that are accessible by small districts, the capacity to operate a charter school should be improved. Specifically, small school districts, with little capacity to take on a task of this nature without assistance, will benefit from the results of this project. (Pg. e35 – 36)

Weaknesses:

None noted.

Reader's Score: 35

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the design of the proposed project. In determining the quality of the design of the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors (up to 30 points):

- (1) The extent to which the proposed project demonstrates a rationale (as defined in 34 CFR 77.1(c));
- (2) The extent to which the goals, objectives, and outcomes to be achieved by the proposed project are clearly specified and measurable;
- (3) The extent to which the proposed project represents an exceptional approach to the priority or priorities established for the competition; and
- (4) The mechanisms the applicant will use to broadly disseminate information on its project so as to support further development or replication.

Strengths:

A strong case is presented for the necessity of the specific outcomes provided by the project. It is clearly stated that the tri-state partnership will work with their own established authorizing policies to identify, through research, the best practices for districts to use for charter school authorization. (Pg. e36 – e38)

Goals and objectives are clearly defined with adequate measures of completion. These goals are aligned to the processes, outputs and outcomes as delineated in the Logic Model. (Pg. e38, e43 – e55)

Throughout the application, the narrative speaks to the difficulty districts have authorizing charter schools, whether the district is large and authorizes many charters or the district is rural and authorizes a single charter. Because a lack of staff devoted to authorizing charters, or conflicting loyalties within a district, the fact remains that identifying and disseminating best practices by beginning with a group of authorizers that have good existing policies and vetting them through research to find “Best Practices” to disseminate is a great approach to the Absolute Priority of this grant program. (Pg. e27 – e30)

Six different methods of dissemination will be used to share results of the project. These methods offer a variety of practices that will reach a broad audience, thereby making the project well known and utilized. (Pg. e54)

Weaknesses:

There is not a clear demonstration of the actual engagement of authorizers in this project. There are few letters of support that actually state they will participate in the project. There are no letters from specific districts that are authorized discussing they will participate in the actual study.

Reader's Score: 27

Selection Criteria - Quality of Management Plan/adequacy of resources

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the management plan and adequacy of resources for the proposed project. In determining the quality of the management plan and adequacy of resources for the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors (up to 15 points):
 - (1) The adequacy of the management plan to achieve the objectives of the proposed project on time and within budget, including clearly defined responsibilities, timelines, and milestones for accomplishing project tasks;
 - (2) The extent to which the costs are reasonable in relation to the objectives, design, and potential significance of the proposed project; and
 - (3) The relevance and demonstrated commitment of each partner in the proposed project to the implementation and success of the project.

Strengths:

A timeline is provided including specific tasks by timeframes, along with entities and/or individuals responsible for each task. Each task is aligned to a goal as stated in the narrative. This is well done and will be easily tracked by the assigned project director. (Pg. e55 – e62)

Letters of support are provided by each entity expressing support for the partnership and the scope of the project. These partners have worked together on many projects through the tenure of the organizations, making this a natural extension of their collaborative efforts. (Pg. e56 and Appendix B)

Weaknesses:

There is no discussion as to whether or not costs are reasonable based on the scope of the project. A budget narrative gives specific information regarding expenses, but no information regarding the reasonableness of the costs.

It is difficult to determine reasonableness of the costs provided. The budget says that certain costs are for illustration purposes only making it difficult to assess. (Pg. 201)

Reader's Score: 12

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Personnel

1. **The Secretary considers the quality of the personnel who will carry out the proposed project. In determining the quality of project personnel, the Secretary considers the following factors (up to 10 points):**

(1) The extent to which the applicant encourages applications for employment from persons who are members of groups that have traditionally been underrepresented based on race, color, national origin, gender, age, or disability;

(2) The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of the project director or principal investigator; and

(3) The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of key project personnel.

Strengths:

The Colorado Charter School Institute includes a statement regarding balancing the agency by ensuring many different groups and lifestyles are included in the organization. (Pg. 68)

The narrative states that although a project director is not named at this time, a candidate will be hired upon receiving the grant. A list of qualifications are included that if followed, will secure an individual well-versed to take on the role of project director. (Pg. e63)

Key project personnel from each partner are listed, along with their qualifications. Individual resumes provide information indicating a wide variety of national level work has been done by the member partners in the charter sector experiences from each person on the project. (Pg. e63)

Weaknesses:

There is no discussion regarding partner agencies and their approach to utilizing underrepresented groups in employment practices.

Reader's Score: 8

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Evaluation

1. **The Secretary considers the quality of the evaluation to be conducted of the proposed project. In determining the quality of the evaluation, the Secretary considers the extent to which the methods of evaluation include the use of objective performance measures that are clearly related to the intended outcomes of the project and will produce quantitative and qualitative data to the extent possible (up to 10 points).**

Strengths:

The evaluator is named along with the agency with which he is affiliated. He has significant experience working within the charter sector in the area of authorizing best practices. He has research experience through his work with the Center on Reinventing Public Education. (Pg. e68)

The evaluation is outlined as it corresponds to the project's goals and objectives, and includes measurement tools and the method of measurement to be utilized. The evaluator will work with his supporting team to assess both process and products of the project. Both quantitative and qualitative data will be provided per research standards on all goals related to the project. (Pg. e71 and e78 – 79)

Weaknesses:

None noted.

Reader's Score: 10

Priority Questions

Competitive Preference Priority 1 - Building Capacity in the Authorizing Process

1. **Competitive Preference Priority 1--Building Capacity in the Authorizing Process for Educational Agencies with the Most Need (Up to 5 points, only available to applicants meeting Absolute Priority 1)**

Projects that propose to target one or more of the following: States that have enacted laws in the last five years allowing charter schools to open; authorized public chartering agencies (as defined in the NIA) with fewer than ten charter schools; and authorized public chartering agencies that authorize a significant number of charter schools experiencing significant low performance or non-compliance with academic, financial, governance, or operational (including school safety) requirements.

Strengths:

Within the narrative, the applicant discusses the population of district-sponsored charter schools that exhibit low performance or non-compliance with one or more areas of a framework – academic, operational, governance, or financial. (Pg. e23)

Weaknesses:

It is implied that the project will work with, but not specifically target, authorizers with fewer than 10 charter schools in their portfolio. (Pg. e25)

There is no discussion as to how many small authorizers will be included in this project. There is no information provided on the number of authorizers that would fit the target criteria in Colorado and Florida.

Reader's Score: 3

Competitive Preference Priority 2 - Empowering Families and Individuals

1. Competitive Preference Priority 2--Empowering Families and Individuals To Choose a High-Quality Education That Meets Their Unique Needs (Up to 5 points)

Projects that are designed to address increasing access to educational choice for one or more of the following groups of children or students:

- (i) Children or students with disabilities.
- (ii) English learners.
- (iii) Students who are Indians, as defined in section 6151 of the ESEA.
- (iv) Children or students in communities served by rural local educational agencies.

Strengths:

Through the natural process of improving authorizing practices across the charter sector, the applicant will be able to increase choices for disadvantaged students. (Pg. e23)

Weaknesses:

The specifics of this criterion are implied but not actually stated.

The applicant states that Civil Rights Solutions is a partner, but they are not listed in the budget.

Reader's Score: 4

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Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Colorado Charter School Institute (U282T180011)

Reader #2: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Significance of the proposed project		
1. Significance	35	32
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1. Project Design	30	30
Quality of Management Plan/adequacy of resources		
1. Management Plan/Resources	15	13
Quality of Project Personnel		
1. Project Personnel	10	8
Quality of the Project Evaluation		
1. Project Evaluation	10	9
Sub Total	100	92
Priority Questions		
Competitive Preference Priority 1		
Building Capacity in the Authorizing Process		
1. Building Capacity	5	3
Sub Total	5	3
Competitive Preference Priority 2		
Empowering Families and Individuals		
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Sub Total	5	4
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Panel #1 - CSP National Dissemination - 1: 84.282T

Reader #2: *****

Applicant: Colorado Charter School Institute (U282T180011)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Significance of the proposed project

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- (1) The potential for generalizing from the findings or results of the proposed project;
- (2) The extent to which the results of the proposed project are to be disseminated in ways that will enable others to use the information or strategies;
- (3) The likelihood that the proposed project will result in system change or improvement; and
- (4) The extent to which the proposed project is likely to build local capacity to provide, improve, or expand services that address the needs of the target population.

Strengths:

The project provides strong evidence of the potential to generalize from project findings in two ways. First, the 2015 State of Authorizing Report by NACSA creates a clear link between the percentage of school districts who are small authorizers (71% of all district authorizers have 1-2 schools) and the need for resources and tools to support them because they lack staff, and the staff they have often lack the knowledge and policy understanding required for effective authorizing (e28-29). NACSA also documents that over the last five years, there has been a significant increase in the number of district authorizers with 93 of the 100 new authorizers being school districts (e35-36). Together, these data provide evidence of the national need that can be met through this project. Second, the project plans to create a cross-state summative report on Goal 2 (increasing enrollment of educationally disadvantaged students) that will generalize results from all three states to support districts in improving access to enrollment to these student populations (e49).

The project defines a clear partnership among Colorado, Florida, California associations that will share and disseminate resources directly within their own states, with their relevant State Entities (SE) and State Educational Agencies (SEA) and with other authorizers in other states. Information will be made available through webinars, in-person meetings, conferences, professional development and on each partner's website (e40-45).

The project identifies that it will utilize NACSA essential practices as the framework for quality authorizations and that tools and resources will be aligned to each of the 12 practices. Further, the applicant provides clear evidence that LEAs (districts) are behind all other authorizer types in implementing practices aligned to NACSA essential practices. In doing so, the proposal provides a table (e36) that shows that nationally, LEA (district) authorizers use 8.5 out of 12 practices whereas all other authorizers use 10.3 – 11.5 out of 12 practices. The applicant further describes (e36) the need for improving quality practices in each of the target states (CO – 9.6, CA – 8.0, FL – 9.2).

The project clearly defines its measure of success for capacity building and system improvement within OBJ 1.3: 5% increase in number of districts using 10 or more NACSA essential practices (e48) and Obj 3.3: 15% increase in implementation of best practice tools (e53). Specific plans and aligned activities are directly associated with Goals 1 and 3 that will build local capacity of authorizers in all three states which can ultimately result in system improvement. For example, Goal 1 activities begin with each state assessing the current tools and resources aligned to NACSA essential practices and then creating collaborative plans to share resources among the three states and create 12 new tools and trainings associated with rolling out the tools.

Weaknesses:

The project does not meet outstanding without weakness because the application lacks clear evidence demonstrating engagement of authorizers in all states to participate in the project. While there are four districts in Colorado and two districts in FL that provide support letters, none of the letters state that the districts are a) charter school authorizers, b) meet a competitive preference, or c) agree to participate in the project should it be funded. The application lacks any support or commitments from CA charter authorizers (e117a-o). The lack of committed authorizers for this project brings into question the capacity of the collaborative to significantly impact the field and provide the system change expected for this project.

Reader's Score: 32

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the design of the proposed project. In determining the quality of the design of the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors (up to 30 points):

- (1) The extent to which the proposed project demonstrates a rationale (as defined in 34 CFR 77.1(c));**
- (2) The extent to which the goals, objectives, and outcomes to be achieved by the proposed project are clearly specified and measurable;**
- (3) The extent to which the proposed project represents an exceptional approach to the priority or priorities established for the competition; and**
- (4) The mechanisms the applicant will use to broadly disseminate information on its project so as to support further development or replication.**

Strengths:

The applicant provides a clear rationale as evidenced by the logic model (e38) that meets all federal requirements by including aligned goals, inputs, activities, outputs and outcomes. For example, the logic model includes project goals that are also described in other parts of the proposal and the activities, outputs and outcomes are all aligned to the project goals.

The project has 4 identified goals and includes more than one measurable objective for each goal (e47-55). Each objective is clearly specified and measurable and the applicant provides a description of key activities that will support the applicant's ability to achieve the outcomes and objectives. For example, even though the use of the word 'significant' in goal 3 when referring to the number of high need districts that will be served, the applicant clearly defines state level needs assessments in partner states using each state's definition of significant in alignment with state statutes and charter regulations. The proposal provides measurable objectives for increasing engagement with high need districts and clearly defines engagement (e51-52).

The proposal provides an exceptional approach to the priorities for this competition by engaging in a strong and significant partnership among three states with long standing charter laws to create open source tools to improve authorization quality in all three states. The proposal acknowledges the challenges it will be faced as it attempts to on-board non-engaged districts, particularly those with small portfolios and/or those in rural communities and plans for "high-touch efforts" and states that "diligence and persistence" will be required in order to effectively engage these authorizers. The project plans to first build relationships and then offer supports to these districts to support their authorization efforts (e51). The project plans workgroups in each state including one for rural authorizers so they can review tools, network and support each other (e53). Each state will provide at least four face to face professional development opportunities assisting authorizers in understanding and using the new tools.

As part of this exceptional approach, Tri-State Alliance plans to collaborate with all three SEAs on dissemination so that this work is directly aligned with each SEA's Charter School Planning (CSP) grant. Support letters that include commitments from Colorado and Florida Departments of Education demonstrate that at least two of the SEAs have already agreed to collaborate both in state and with their national SEA colleagues (e117e-f). The project plans to co-

facilitate meetings with SEAs and the state authorizer associations (e40-41) and hold professional networking meetings in conjunction with other national events where authorizers are likely to participate (e53). These strategies will provide additional dissemination avenues to share tools. Tri-State Alliance partners plan to invite authorizers and SEA/SE organizations from across the US to participate in annual meetings and commits to 75 hours of free mentoring throughout the project to support them in understanding and using the tools/resources designed through this project. Professional development offerings will also be free and virtual to further encourage participation in other states.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: **30**

Selection Criteria - Quality of Management Plan/adequacy of resources

- 1. The Secretary considers the quality of the management plan and adequacy of resources for the proposed project. In determining the quality of the management plan and adequacy of resources for the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors (up to 15 points):**

- (1) The adequacy of the management plan to achieve the objectives of the proposed project on time and within budget, including clearly defined responsibilities, timelines, and milestones for accomplishing project tasks;**
- (2) The extent to which the costs are reasonable in relation to the objectives, design, and potential significance of the proposed project; and**
- (3) The relevance and demonstrated commitment of each partner in the proposed project to the implementation and success of the project.**

Strengths:

The proposal provides a strong management plan and resources are clearly aligned to ensure project success. Specifically, the applicant provides a detailed timeline that includes milestones and clearly defined responsibilities with associated titles (PD= Project Director, etc.) for team members or organizations in charter of each activity (e51-62). Each activity is directly aligned with a project goal to further clarify purpose of the activity.

The project identifies how the project will be organized (e55-68). This includes description of the role of CSI providing project leadership, compliance and fiscal management, while the three authorizer associations will provide state leadership and day to day project management. This includes a scaffolded core leadership team that includes: two CSI staff acting as co-leaders, a part time project director overseeing the project and coordinating among the states, 3 state project directors responsible to manage the work in their state and project support staff as needed by each state. It also describes how often the core team will meet including both virtual and face to face meetings.

In general, the budget narrative provides a very strong description of how funds will be utilized, and costs are reasonable in relation to objectives, project design and significance (e196-203). For instance, the budget lays out each partner organization's budget estimate by category to demonstrate equity among partners and as an example of how that organization is likely to utilize their assigned budget.

Each of the four key partners: CSI, Colorado Association of Charter School Authorizers (CACSA), Florida Association of Charter School Authorizers (FACSA) and California Charter Authorizing Professionals (CCAP) provided a letter demonstrating their organization's participation in the project.

Weaknesses:

The project does not meet criteria for outstanding without weaknesses due to budget narrative inconsistencies and lack of clarity regarding commitment of partners. Specifically, the proposal states that the project director will be hired post award (e63) but the budget narrative states that the estimated project director salary is based on current compensation of the project director. The budget narrative states that NCSECS will receive \$5000 per year and mentions this will be used in part to support work of FACSAs (e202). However, the project narrative does not include activities specific to this aspect of NCSECS's commitment. Key personnel are listed in the management plan (e63-67), but there is no associated budget for these individuals. The project narrative identifies 'brain trust' participants (e39-40) and states that partnership letters are included, but only one of the organizations (NCSECS) mentioned in the narrative has provided a letter of support.

Reader's Score: 13

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Personnel

1. **The Secretary considers the quality of the personnel who will carry out the proposed project. In determining the quality of project personnel, the Secretary considers the following factors (up to 10 points):**
 - (1) **The extent to which the applicant encourages applications for employment from persons who are members of groups that have traditionally been underrepresented based on race, color, national origin, gender, age, or disability;**
 - (2) **The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of the project director or principal investigator; and**
 - (3) **The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of key project personnel.**

Strengths:

The project provides sufficient detail regarding the relevant training and experience of the project director and principal investigators (PI). While the project doesn't specifically identify co-PIs, it states that CSI's Executive Director and Chief of Staff are responsible for overall leadership and project oversight which is in line with the role of a PI. Resumes (e81-86) are provided for both individuals which clearly demonstrate they have strong charter experience, connections throughout the state and experience in critical areas such as assessment, data, compliance and state/federal reporting.

The narrative states a project director will be hired (e63) and identifies key responsibilities and qualifications that include ability to monitor progress in each state, facilitate inter-state collaboration and ensure the project produces measurable outcomes. Each state will have a state director that will be identified upon award (e39) and describes relevant qualifications and responsibilities for these individuals including: season charter authorizer leaders with a track record of success who are invested and committed to the work. Each state will also have the flexibility to hire part time project assistants if needed to support the work of the state project director.

Weaknesses:

The proposal does not meet criteria for outstanding without weakness because it lacks sufficient detail in how the applicant will encourage applicants from underrepresented persons and there is a lack of clarity regarding key project personnel responsibilities. Specifically, the project provides a response to sub-criterion 1 (encourage applications from traditionally underrepresented persons) and states that CSI has a non-discrimination policy and identifies state regulations for ensuring the board represents the geographic diversity of the state (e68). While it states, "CSI continues to seek additional ways to expand its outreach to ensure all have access to job opportunities" (e68), this statement does not describe how CSI will encourage applicants from underrepresented persons.

The applicant also provides qualifications, including relevant training and experience for 15 individuals it identifies as key project personnel (e63-67), but there lacks roles and responsibilities for these individuals. Further, the resumes section only provides resumes for 10 of the 15 key personnel. The applicant identifies responsibilities within the timeline (e58) for state teams but does not clearly define who this team is and the relevant experience/qualifications to be a member of the

state team.

Reader's Score: 8

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Evaluation

- 1. The Secretary considers the quality of the evaluation to be conducted of the proposed project. In determining the quality of the evaluation, the Secretary considers the extent to which the methods of evaluation include the use of objective performance measures that are clearly related to the intended outcomes of the project and will produce quantitative and qualitative data to the extent possible (up to 10 points).**

Strengths:

The University of Colorado Denver school of Public Policy, Center for Education Policy Analysis (CEPA) is identified as the external evaluator for the project (e69). A resume is provided for the Director that clearly demonstrates his capacity and experience both in charter school policy and in evaluation that includes federal evaluation (e110-116). Specifically, the evaluator has experience with federal K-12 evaluations including charter projects (e69).

The evaluation plan is clearly aligned to the project goals and objectives. For example, as part of the evaluation plan for goal 2, the evaluator will conduct annual surveys of school board members and superintendents to assess the extent to which districts leaders understand the roles and obligations regarding strong authorizing practices (e70). This will provide qualitative and quantitative data needed to further develop resources and tools and engage districts in participation. The project also plans state board of education surveys or interviews to deepen the understanding of SBE expectations and understanding of authorizing (e71).

The evaluation plan has project performance measures that include objectives, measurement tool or method and data collection timetables (e71).

Weaknesses:

While the project evaluation provided is excellent, it is not outstanding without weaknesses because the proposal did not include baseline data as required by the Federal Register (26047).

Reader's Score: 9

Priority Questions

Competitive Preference Priority 1 - Building Capacity in the Authorizing Process

- 1. Competitive Preference Priority 1--Building Capacity in the Authorizing Process for Educational Agencies with the Most Need (Up to 5 points, only available to applicants meeting Absolute Priority 1)**

Projects that propose to target one or more of the following: States that have enacted laws in the last five years allowing charter schools to open; authorized public chartering agencies (as defined in the NIA) with fewer than ten charter schools; and authorized public chartering agencies that authorize a significant number of charter schools experiencing significant low performance or non-compliance with academic, financial, governance, or operational (including school safety) requirements.

Strengths:

The Tri-State Alliance identifies that it meets Competitive Preference Priority 1 (CPP1). The applicant states it will target projects that will serve (e21): states that have enacted charters school laws within the last five year (via dissemination and free mentoring); authorizers with fewer than 10 charter schools and authorizers that have a significant number of charters experiencing significant low performance or non-compliance (via direct resources, materials and professional

development to school district authorizers in Colorado (CO), Florida (FL) and California(CA).

In addition, the project will disseminate nationally to school districts authorizing small numbers of charters and those with significant numbers of high need schools (as defined by CPP1). The project documented the national scope for dissemination to school district authorizers using the following data from the 2015 National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA) report "State of Charter Authorizing". This report documents that across the United States (US), 90% of all authorizers are school districts and that 91% of those districts authorize 5 or fewer schools (e24). Furthermore, of the 1050 US charter authorizers, 71% are school districts that serve only 1-2 schools (e28).

Weaknesses:

While the proposal provides a strong response to CPP1, it does not clearly identify the scope of the project by identifying the potential number of 'small authorizers' they will target. California data are clear (92% of 327 authorizers serve fewer than six schools), but Florida and Colorado provide only the number of district authorizers, without a breakdown to determine the extent to which these authorizers oversee fewer than 10 schools (e25-26). No data are provided to demonstrate the potential number for authorizers in each state that have low performing or non-compliant charter schools.

Reader's Score: 3

Competitive Preference Priority 2 - Empowering Families and Individuals

1. Competitive Preference Priority 2--Empowering Families and Individuals To Choose a High-Quality Education That Meets Their Unique Needs (Up to 5 points)

Projects that are designed to address increasing access to educational choice for one or more of the following groups of children or students:

- (i) Children or students with disabilities.**
- (ii) English learners.**
- (iii) Students who are Indians, as defined in section 6151 of the ESEA.**
- (iv) Children or students in communities served by rural local educational agencies.**

Strengths:

The project clearly defines its plans to address increasing access to educational choice for educationally disadvantaged students, specifically children with disabilities and English learners. The applicant provides comparative data documenting inequities in charter school enrollment in all three target states. Using each state's Department of Education data, the applicant documents that Colorado and Florida charter schools serve 5% fewer students with disabilities than traditional public schools and California charter schools serve 5% fewer English learners than traditional public schools (e48-49).

The applicant defines a goal (#2), relevant outcomes, activities and measurable objectives targeting this equity challenge. Goal 2 specifies this intent to "educate districts... about district authorizing and oversight responsibilities under the law... to expand options for all students... improving access and services for ... students with disabilities and English learners" (e48).

Activities include needs assessment to determine barriers preventing district authorizers from ensuring their schools adequately serve educationally disadvantaged students. States will then create and implement a plan to work with stakeholders to address findings and create a cross state summative report generalizing results (e49-50).

The project has an identified partner, National Center on Special Education in Charter Schools (NCSECS) that will be funded to provide technical assistance and resources to support the work and will participate on the advisory 'brain trust' (e42-43).

Weaknesses:

The project identifies Civil Rights Solutions as a partner that will help districts take a proactive approach to better serve English learners, but there is no associated budget and no letter of support.

Reader's Score: **4**

Status: Submitted

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Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Colorado Charter School Institute (U282T180011)

Reader #3: *****

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1. Project Personnel	10	7
Quality of the Project Evaluation		
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Sub Total	100	95
Priority Questions		
Competitive Preference Priority 1		
Building Capacity in the Authorizing Process		
1. Building Capacity	5	5
Sub Total	5	5
Competitive Preference Priority 2		
Empowering Families and Individuals		
1. Families and Individuals	5	5
Sub Total	5	5
Total	110	105

Technical Review Form

Panel #1 - CSP National Dissemination - 1: 84.282T

Reader #3: *****

Applicant: Colorado Charter School Institute (U282T180011)

Questions

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(3) The likelihood that the proposed project will result in system change or improvement; and

(4) The extent to which the proposed project is likely to build local capacity to provide, improve, or expand services that address the needs of the target population.

Strengths:

The applicant has comprehensively demonstrated the potential for generalizing from the findings or results of the proposed project. This is, in part, evidenced by the need for the project, and by the project focus on meeting “the myriad of unmet needs of the predominate authorizers in the sector, namely school districts” (e24). The applicant cites that “nationally 90% of authorizers are districts” (e24). The project outcomes are easily generalizable to all districts and especially to small and/or rural districts with no “authorizing staff” and in some cases have “literally never received an application before” (e29).

The applicant has very comprehensively laid out dissemination strategies to share the results of the proposed project and disseminate in ways that will enable others to use the information or strategies. This is evidenced in the research and development phase of the materials and tools where the partner states benefit from the expertise in each state and avoid duplication of effort (e46). Other strategies include the free dissemination of the resulting materials via websites, in-person and virtual trainings, collaboration with other national partners (e43), and quarterly meetings with partners. Additionally, dissemination strategies include broad outreach to share information and learnings beyond the Tri-State Alliance. This is evidenced by the following: intentionally partnering with CSP SEA grant states and contacts via conference calls and joint meetings (e40) to expand the Tri-State Alliance’s capacity to disseminate information, which is a strong strategy in that many SEA CSP states have dissemination grants and are a viable network for dissemination; sharing lessons learned and best practices at annual meetings and online resources; convening joint SEA and partner webinars; and participating/presenting at conferences and forums (e41).

The applicant has demonstrated a strong likelihood that the proposed project will result in system change or improvement. This is in part evidenced by the past efforts of the three partner authorizers to improve and strengthen district authorization activities in their own states. Each of the partner states has already engaged in the proposed grant activities and are proposing to improve and expand their individual practices in a collective effort. In so doing, the goal is to improve all district authoring efforts across the charter sector (e35-37). The applicant notes that the Tri-State Alliance will “freely share the materials, tools and model policies that each state has already created so that other states can use them” (e46).

The Tri-State Alliance’s proposed project is very likely to build local capacity to provide, improve, and expand services that address district authorizer needs. The need is so widespread, not only are 90 percent of the authorizers districts, but they (districts) also “constitute nearly 50% of the nation’s largest authorizers” (e36). One example of this proven track record of building capacity is the Florida Association of Charter School Authorizers (FACSA). FACSA has hosted 7 in-person

Boot Camps providing basic training for authorizing, custom charter monitoring software “which has been fully implemented by 8 authorizers, five are in process and 40 have been trained” (e33). Florida has also developed a website with authorizing tools. The applicant intends to measure its impact from this project by increasing district authorizer use of NACSA’s Essential Practices among district authorizers (e30, 35-37).

Weaknesses:

There were no weaknesses.

Reader's Score: 35

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

- 1. The Secretary considers the quality of the design of the proposed project. In determining the quality of the design of the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors (up to 30 points):**

- (1) The extent to which the proposed project demonstrates a rationale (as defined in 34 CFR 77.1(c));**
- (2) The extent to which the goals, objectives, and outcomes to be achieved by the proposed project are clearly specified and measurable;**
- (3) The extent to which the proposed project represents an exceptional approach to the priority or priorities established for the competition; and**
- (4) The mechanisms the applicant will use to broadly disseminate information on its project so as to support further development or replication.**

Strengths:

The applicant has a well-defined rationale and description of need. Of positive note is the well-defined need to strengthen authorizing practices in district authorizers, especially small and /or rural authorizers (e28-29, 31, 36), with data and the practicalities of why district authorizers struggle. The logic model is well laid out, with inputs, activities, outputs, and short and long-term outcomes (e38) in alignment with the project goals.

The applicant has provided four goals with accompanying specific, targeted, measurable and time bound objectives to be achieved by the proposed project (e43-55). Additionally, these objectives are directly aligned to the proposed evaluation plan (e75-78). Of positive note is Goal 2, to “educate districts and other key stakeholders about districts’ ongoing authorizing and oversight responsibilities...” (e48) which also addresses CPP2. The results of the needs assessment in Goal 2.1a is a “cross state summative report that identifies similarities and differences in findings generalized across the states” (e49). These findings on why some charters serve fewer student with disabilities or ELLs could prove to be very useful information for the charter sector as a whole.

The applicant has very ably described a project with an exceptional approach to a well-defined need, strengthening district charter school authorizing to expand quality charter schools and improve student outcomes (e38). Exceptional in the approach is the partnership of three-state charter organizations collaborating to support district authoring across the sector. That is, these three state partners have expressed the notion that by improving district authorizer practices, the charter sector will improve as a whole (e35-37). The partner states have initiated this effort on an individual state level and are now proposing to have broader outreach by combing their efforts. Of positive note, is the use of “NACSA’s body of research... as a bedrock” for the project (e41).

The applicant proposed using the following strategies to broadly disseminate information from this project which will potentially further support the development of district authorizing practices beyond the Tri State Alliance. This is evidenced by the following: by extending and open invitation to interested authorizers to attend CACSA, FACSA and CCAP meetings or the national core project meeting; inviting “five state authorizers from states outside the Tri-State

Alliance to attend a meeting or join webinars and conference calls (e53); provide “free mentoring support to interested states”; and share all resources and materials (e53).

Weaknesses:

There were no weaknesses.

Reader's Score: 30

Selection Criteria - Quality of Management Plan/adequacy of resources

- 1. The Secretary considers the quality of the management plan and adequacy of resources for the proposed project. In determining the quality of the management plan and adequacy of resources for the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors (up to 15 points):**

(1) The adequacy of the management plan to achieve the objectives of the proposed project on time and within budget, including clearly defined responsibilities, timelines, and milestones for accomplishing project tasks;

(2) The extent to which the costs are reasonable in relation to the objectives, design, and potential significance of the proposed project; and

(3) The relevance and demonstrated commitment of each partner in the proposed project to the implementation and success of the project.

Strengths:

The applicant has provided a management plan with a high likelihood of achieving the objectives of the proposed project on time and within budget. This is evidenced by the chart on pages e57-e62 which provides a timeline, activities by goal, and state responsibilities. Additionally, the applicant partners propose the following ongoing activities to facilitate accomplishing project activities: monthly meetings/calls, workgroup meetings, frequent invitations to unengaged authorizers in and outside the Tri State Alliance, attendance at state association and core project meetings and ongoing consultation with the “brain trust” (e57). For a collaboration of this nature it is a reasonable expectation that one entity (CSI) will be the fiscal agent and provide over sight to the project.

For a project of this size and scope (three large state authorizing entities), the initial budget projections and costs are reasonable in relation to the objectives, design, and potential significance of the proposed project. Additionally, the applicant has provided a budget narrative well aligned to the objectives and descriptive of the various spending categories, given there are still some unknowns with regard to state staffing (e196-203).

The applicant has demonstrated strong partner relevance and commitment of each partner in the proposed project. The partners bring specific knowledge and experience aligned to the project goals and to the implementation and success of the project. This is, in part, evidenced by the tri-state collaboration between three states with long standing charter authorizing experience, strong human capital and equally strong social capital (e e22, 24-26, e30-e35), the use of the experience and expertise of a “brain trust” of advisors (e39-40) and partnership with other national organizations and SEAs (e40-41). The applicant has provided letters of support from all the proposed partners (e117).

Weaknesses:

While it is understandable that state staffing and contractual efforts have yet to be decided, a budget “for illustration only” will require more definition and detail.

While letters of support were provided for the “initial” Brain Trust partners, the applicant did not provide letters of support from all partners. This makes it difficult to determine true commitment from all brain trust partners who the applicant proposes will share a significant body of knowledge and expertise they would bring to the project (e40).

Reader's Score: 13

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Personnel

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the personnel who will carry out the proposed project. In determining the quality of project personnel, the Secretary considers the following factors (up to 10 points):
 - (1) The extent to which the applicant encourages applications for employment from persons who are members of groups that have traditionally been underrepresented based on race, color, national origin, gender, age, or disability;
 - (2) The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of the project director or principal investigator; and
 - (3) The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of key project personnel.

Strengths:

The applicant (CSI) abides by state statute requiring geographic representation on its board. CSI also has a non-discrimination policy (e68).

The qualifications of the project's key personnel (State Directors) are extensive with regard to charter sector experience, relevant to the project activities and high-level state or national administrators. (Resumes, e63-67). Each Director and program partner brings the necessary relevant training and experience. As evidenced in part by service on NACSA's board, being NACSA Leaders or enrolled in the Leaders Program (e41). Their strong connection to and understanding of NACSA's research and essential practices is critical content knowledge for the success of this project.

Weaknesses:

While the applicant has a non-discrimination policy, it did not address or demonstrate how it encourages applications for employment from persons who are members of groups that have traditionally been underrepresented based on race, color, national origin, gender, age, or disability.

The qualifications of the proposed project director (from CSI) is unclear, as the project director has not yet been chosen. There was no job description, making it unclear as to the individual's qualifications (e63).

Reader's Score: 7

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Evaluation

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the evaluation to be conducted of the proposed project. In determining the quality of the evaluation, the Secretary considers the extent to which the methods of evaluation include the use of objective performance measures that are clearly related to the intended outcomes of the project and will produce quantitative and qualitative data to the extent possible (up to 10 points).

Strengths:

The applicant has already identified the Center for Educational Policy and Analysis (CEPA) as the external evaluator and the evaluation Team Lead (e69). The CEPA evaluation team brings years of experience evaluating “statewide collective impact” initiatives (e69).

The applicant has proposed to collect both quantitative and qualitative data. Additionally, the project objectives to be evaluated, measurement tools/methods and data collection timeline were provided (e71-75); detail included data collection steps, data reviews data collection instruments, and performance targets that are related to the intended outcomes of the project (e54-59).

Weaknesses:

There were no weaknesses.

Reader's Score: 10

Priority Questions**Competitive Preference Priority 1 - Building Capacity in the Authorizing Process****1. Competitive Preference Priority 1--Building Capacity in the Authorizing Process for Educational Agencies with the Most Need (Up to 5 points, only available to applicants meeting Absolute Priority 1)**

Projects that propose to target one or more of the following: States that have enacted laws in the last five years allowing charter schools to open; authorized public chartering agencies (as defined in the NIA) with fewer than ten charter schools; and authorized public chartering agencies that authorize a significant number of charter schools experiencing significant low performance or non-compliance with academic, financial, governance, or operational (including school safety) requirements.

Strengths:

The applicant proposes to target the following: authorized public chartering agencies (as defined in the NIA) with fewer than ten charter schools; and authorized public chartering agencies that authorize a significant number of charter schools experiencing significant low performance or non-compliance with academic, financial, governance, or operational requirements (e23). The applicant proposes that by the end of the grant period authorizing districts “will have a measurable increase in the use of best practices” (e 23) and thus increase authorizer capacity on charter oversight.

The Applicant has comprehensively demonstrated in its definition of need (e28-31, e51) and tri-state project design how the proposed project will result in “a measurable increase in these district’s use of best practices, thereby building their capacity to effectively serve the charters they oversee” (e23).

The four project goals and objectives (e45-55) are directly aligned to ensure improved district authorizing efforts.

Weaknesses:

There were no weaknesses.

Reader's Score: 5

Competitive Preference Priority 2 - Empowering Families and Individuals

1. **Competitive Preference Priority 2--Empowering Families and Individuals To Choose a High-Quality Education That Meets Their Unique Needs (Up to 5 points)**
- Projects that are designed to address increasing access to educational choice for one or more of the following groups of children or students:
- (i) Children or students with disabilities.
 - (ii) English learners.
 - (iii) Students who are Indians, as defined in section 6151 of the ESEA.
 - (iv) Children or students in communities served by rural local educational agencies.

Strengths:

The applicant clearly and comprehensively addresses CPP 2 in Goal 2 and the accompanying objectives (e48-50). The applicant proposes to increase access to educational choice for the following groups of students:

- (i) Children or students with disabilities.
- (ii) English learners.
- (iv) Children or students in communities served by rural local educational agencies

This is, in part, evidenced by the initial needs assessment to identify barriers that “prevent district and small/rural authorizers from ensuring that their charter portfolio adequately serves educationally disadvantaged students” (e49). The applicant objectives to close the achievement gap for various traditionally under-served student subgroups (e50) are ambitious.

Of positive note is the plan to use the results of the needs assessment to identify barriers to serving educationally disadvantaged students (e49) from three large states; this will inform the sector as a whole.

Weaknesses:

There were no weaknesses.

Reader's Score: 5

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